



# UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

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**CHUCK ROSENBERG, UNITED STATES ATTORNEY**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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Jim Rybicki  
Public Information Officer  
Phone: (703) 842-4050 Fax: (703) 549-5202  
E-Mail: [usavae.press@usdoj.gov](mailto:usavae.press@usdoj.gov)  
Website: [www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae)

Further Information Contact:  
Susan Vick (804) 819-5400

## **THREE FAMILY MEMBERS PLEAD GUILTY IN CONNECTION WITH WEST END IDENTITY THEFT RING**

(**Richmond, VA**) - John Alexander Caulder, age 41, of Richmond, Virginia, pled guilty today to conspiracy, bank fraud, and aggravated identity theft charges. Caulder faces up to 30 years of federal imprisonment and a fine of up to \$1,000,000 for bank fraud, as well as a mandatory, consecutive term of two years of imprisonment for aggravated identity theft, when sentenced by United District Judge Richard L. Williams on November 7, 2006. His mother, Susan Lively Caulder, age 63, also of Richmond, Virginia pled guilty to obstruction of justice. Mrs. Caulder faces up to 20 years of imprisonment and a maximum fine of up to \$250,000 when sentenced by Judge Williams on November 7, 2006. The pleas were announced by Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Both Heather Nicole Weston and Katharine Caulder Staton - daughter of Susan Caulder - pled guilty to conspiracy to commit bank fraud and aggravated identity theft on July 18, 2006 and July 24, 2006, respectively. They will face the same penalties as John Caulder when they appear for sentencing in October, 2006.

Charges were filed following the execution of federal search warrants at two residences located in the 6200 block of Patterson Avenue in March 2006. John Caulder, his sister, Katharine Staton, and Heather Weston were later indicted by a federal grand jury in May 2006 for conspiracy to commit bank fraud and several counts of aggravated identity theft. The indictment alleged a bank fraud scheme wherein John Caulder, Weston and Staton created counterfeit checks by using names, identification numbers and bank account numbers stolen from a significant number of victims. They also used routing codes assigned to six different financial institutions to legitimize the checks. The checks were used to purchase a variety of merchandise, including jewelry, electronics and furniture. Susan Caulder was indicted at the same time for obstruction of justice in relation to the ongoing federal investigation of the conspiracy.

As part of the plea, John Caulder admitted that the amount of counterfeit checks presented during the eight-month conspiracy was between \$200,000 and \$400,000. Caulder also admitted to stealing the identity of another person to pass counterfeit checks. Caulder has agreed to turn over the stolen goods to a receiver appointed by the court to recover restitution for the victims.

His mother, Susan Caulder, admitted that she had agreed to find out on behalf of her son whether Heather Weston, a co-defendant and family friend, was cooperating with the government against John Caulder. Mrs. Caulder further admitted to obtaining information from Weston and providing it to her son while he was incarcerated. In addition, Mrs. Caulder agreed to turn over to the court-appointed receiver all assets purchased for her by her co-defendants during the course of the conspiracy.

The investigation was conducted by members of the Metro-Richmond Fraud and Identity Theft Task Force. The Task Force was formed in October 2004, to address the growing problem of identity theft and related crimes in the metro Richmond area. The federal, state and local agencies participating in the Task Force on a full-time basis are: U.S. Treasury Inspector General, Office of Investigations; United States Postal Inspection Service; United States Secret Service; Richmond Police Department; and Henrico Police Department. In addition, assistance was provided by the Chesterfield County Police Department. For information on the task force, including assistance for victims of identity theft, visit: [www.fraudandidentitytheftaskforce.com](http://www.fraudandidentitytheftaskforce.com).

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Laura Colombell Marshall.

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